

Psalm 66; Lord's Day 10
FATHER'S PROVIDENCE AND OUR SUFFERING

- I. Suffering teaches.
 - A. Suffering is a constant reality in this life.
 - 1. Suffering is a constant and real part of this life's existence: it is "valley of the shadow of death".
 - 2. Scripture makes clear that God is sovereign also over suffering: He sends it; He measures it; He gives relief from it.
 - B. In general, our Father uses suffering to show...
 - 1. Sin to mankind; so man knows he is a sinner before God.
 - 2. Christ.
 - a. By His suffering Jesus bore the punishment earned by His elect's sins and earned righteousness and eternal life.
 - b. His suffering does not take away suffering, but it does take away its sting (I Cor. 15:55a), changing it into being even a means to experience God's saving nearness.
- II. Scripture teaches that God's grace changes suffering for God's children.
 - A. Romans 8:17ff. teaches much about the sufferings of this present time.
 - B. Psalm 66 shows that God's grace brings benefits through affliction.
 - C. And we learn about chastisement, in distinction from punishment, is judgment sanctified and changed in its purpose.
- III. Suffering enriches God's children spiritually.
 - A. First, suffering shows us where our wealth is, and where our strength and help are not.
 - 1. Suffering reminds us that all earthly things are passing and essentially unsatisfying.
 - 2. We learn that Jesus and all that is in Him is truly soul-satisfying (endearing) and eternal, for His love never fails.
 - 3. Suffering revitalizes our prayer life (Isa. 26:16; Psalm 55:1-4,17).
 - B. Suffering increases our understanding and appreciation of God's Word (Psalm 119:71,72).
 - C. Suffering makes us exercise and develop our spiritual graces (fruit of the spirit).
 - D. Suffering equips us to comfort our fellow-saints (II Cor. 1:3,4).